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DEPARTMENT FOR NEA/ELA AND NEA/IPA

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TAGS: [PREF](#) [KPAL](#) [JO](#) [IS](#)

SUBJECT: SIXTH FATAH GENERAL CONGRESS NOT YET READY FOR  
PRIME TIME, SAYS PNC SPEAKER

REF: AMMAN 600

Classified By: Ambassador David Hale for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Salim Zanon, Speaker of the Palestine National Council and longtime Fatah member, told poloff in mid-April that the Fatah Preparatory Committee met "day and night" in Amman from April 6-10 to discuss plans for a meeting in the coming months of the Sixth Fatah General Conference. Zanon described how Fatah has risen to a "position of responsibility" (i.e. governance) since the 1989 Fifth General Congress held in Tunis, which took place at the height of the first Intifada and several years before Fatah became the central actor in what would become the PA. During that time, there has been a 60 percent change in movement membership, and another General Congress is essential to revitalize the movement, he stressed.

¶2. (C) One focus of the Amman meeting was a discussion of the spate of internal Fatah elections over the past six months throughout the Palestinian Authority - including Gaza, he stressed - that selected Fatah leaders. Zanon claimed that in local, district, and regional contests, over 80 percent of delegates to the Congress have been selected, and that most of the remaining 20 percent would be selected in the next month, including from areas outside the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Note: Post recognizes that this may be an optimistic assessment. End Note.

¶3. (C) The other key issue at the Amman meeting was Fatah's political program, which has gone unrevised since Tunis. The political program must be adjusted to reflect the developments of the last two decades: the Oslo peace process, the formation of the PA, the second Intifada, the Hamas takeover of Gaza, and Annapolis. The largely complete, revised draft political program was subjected to "deep discussion" and passed its first reading among the group gathered in Amman. Zanon said Fatah wants all issues resolved so that the revised program can be ready before the Sixth General Congress, but did not provide details about the working draft.

¶4. (C) According to Zanon, the Preparatory Committee is supposed to meet again in May to set the date for the Congress, which he added will preferably be before any plenary gathering of the PNC (reftel). The site for the Sixth Conference has not been picked, but he thinks it is likely to be in either Amman or Cairo, largely because Israel would not permit many delegates into the West Bank from abroad or from Gaza. Discussions have not yet begun with either the Governments of Jordan or Egypt. "We haven't reached that phase," Zanon added.

¶5. (C) He said he expected the Fatah Congress, when ultimately held, will bring together 1000-1200 delegates, a smaller group than is being demanded by many the movement's grassroots leaders. Any more than 1200 would risk turning the Congress into a "festival." "The youth are the ones who want

the large numbers. They have ambitions," Zanoun noted, adding that "when we let the youth achieve their ambitions (in the past) we got Hamas," a reference to the PA elections of 2006 when Fatah was trounced by Hamas, which took control of the Palestinian Legislative Council and the Palestinian Authority Cabinet.

¶6. (C) Comment: Conversations with Fatah figures in Amman do not shed much light on the likelihood of there being a Sixth Fatah Congress anytime soon, and officials here are more insulated from Fatah's internal conflicts and the crises facing Mahmoud Abbas. In a subsequent conversation, Ahmad Qurei's office director in Amman, Issa al-Shuaibi, noted that Qurei' appeared far more preoccupied with the ongoing negotiations with Israel than with any planning for the Sixth Congress. End Comment.

¶7. (U) This message was coordinated with Consulate General Jerusalem.  
HALE